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HOUSE of SECRETS

APPROVED
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AUTHORITY

JUNE
NO. 60



I DO NOT HAVE
TO KILL MERLIN!
HE'S ALREADY
DEAD!

I'M NOT
DEAD! MY
LIFE-FORCE
IS IN THIS
CAT, BUT IF
I REVEAL
IT, HE'LL
DESTROY MY
BODY!

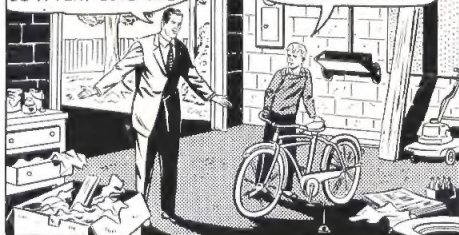
MARK MERLIN'S MOST BIZARRE CASE...

CAPTIVE of the CAT CUDGEL!

COUNTDOWN ON EXCELLENCE

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO CLEAN UP THE GARAGE, JERRY, BUT YOU DIDN'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB.

AW, DAD, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? IT'S NOT VERY IMPORTANT.



HMM...WITH THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE, YOU'LL GET INTO SLOPPY WORK HABITS. IF EVERYONE FELT THAT WAY ABOUT HIS JOB, WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN?



"SUPPOSE A PLUMBER DIDN'T DO HIS WORK RIGHT..."

"OR A SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR..."

"OR A GARAGE MECHANIC..."

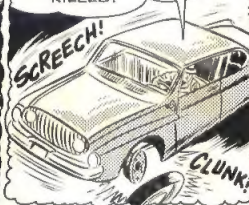
OH, DEAR! AND THE PLUMBER WAS JUST HERE AND SAID EVERYTHING WAS FINE!



I WANTED THE BANK, NOT THE BAKERY!



I JUST HAD MY TIRE CHANGED! THE MECHANIC DIDN'T TIGHTEN THE WHEEL PROPERLY--- I COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!

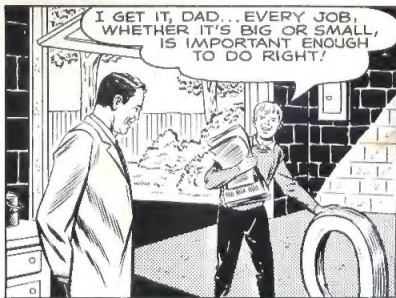


"OR A MAN WHO WORKS ON A SPACE CAPSULE..."

COUNTDOWN... THREE... TWO... ONE... ZERO! HUH? NO BLAST-OFF! SOMEBODY GOOFED!




I GET IT, DAD... EVERY JOB, WHETHER IT'S BIG OR SMALL, IS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO DO RIGHT!



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MARK MERLIN

SLEUTH OF THE SUPERNATURAL



IT WOULD BE SEVERAL MINUTES BEFORE I WOULD LEARN OF THE MAMMOTH MENACE THAT EVEN NOW STALKED THE CITY! THEN THE HUNT WOULD BE ON--NOT ALONE FOR THAT GIANT BUT FOR A SUPERNATURAL SPELL THAT WAS 4,000 YEARS OLD! AND, BY A TWIST OF FATE, I, THE HUNTER, WOULD BECOME...

CAPTIVE OF THE CAT CURSE

THAT BLACK
MONSTER--!
RUN!

IT'S THE
CURSE OF THE
CAT PHARAOH!
IT SEEKS
VENGEANCE
BECAUSE THE
PHARAOH'S TOMB
WAS DISTURBED!

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HOUSE OF SECRETS



THERE IT GOES, MORGAN! AFTER IT-- GOOD GRIEF! DID YOU HEAR THAT?



THE CAT--DISAPPEARED! BUT HOW COULD IT-- WITHOUT LEAVING A SINGLE SIGN?

IT LEFT ONE! WE'D BETTER GET THIS INJURED MAN TO A HOSPITAL!



MEANWHILE, AT THE TERMINAL NEARBY, I WAS MEETING MY SECRETARY ELSA...

MARK! I HAD A GLORIOUS VACATION, BUT A MONTH AWAY FROM YOU WAS MUCH TOO LONG!

THIS WAY MEN-- A SHORT-CUT THROUGH THE TERMINAL, WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT BEAST BEFORE IT STRIKES AGAIN!



AS THE POLICE DASHED BY, I SLOWED MY FRIEND, LIEUT. HEFT, FOR A QUICK QUESTION...

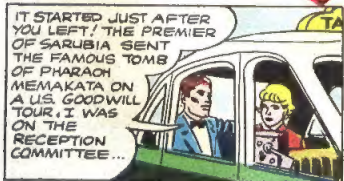
--SO THERE'S ONE WEIRD EXPLANATION FOR IT, MARK--THE CURSE OF THE CAT PHAROAH! THINK THAT OVER!

MARK, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

LET'S GET A CAB AND I'LL TELL YOU!



IT STARTED JUST AFTER YOU LEFT! THE PREMIER OF SARUBIA SENT THE FAMOUS TOMB OF PHAROAH MEMAKATA ON A U.S. GOODWILL TOUR, I WAS ON THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE...



MAY THIS GESTURE BY MY PEOPLE HELP TO SEAL OUR MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP MAYOR GILBERT!

THANK YOU, AMBASSADOR FAZIR! ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MARK MERLIN, AN AUTHORITY ON YOUR NATION'S HISTORY AND CULTURE!



HOUSE OF SECRETS



YOUR NAME IS NOT UNKNOWN TO ME, MR. MERLIN! I AM PROUD TO MEET A MAN WITH YOUR --

STOP! DO NOT UNLOAD THE TOMB OF MEMAKATA OR HIS CURSE WILL BE UPON YOU!

ALERT POLICE GRABBED HIM...

SORRY, MR. AMBASSADOR! A NIGHT IN JAIL WILL COOL HIM OFF!

LET HIM BE! I RECOGNIZE GAMEL SAIK AS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM MY COUNTRY! HE MEANS NO HARM, BUT SUPERSTITION CLOUDS HIS YOUNG VISION!

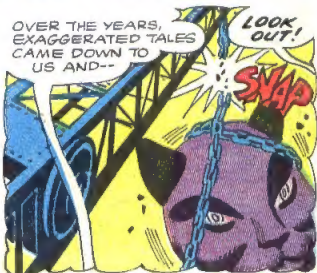


THEN SOME DAYS LATER, AT THE AUDITORIUM, WHERE THE TOMB WAS BEING RESTORED...

OVER THE YEARS, EXAGGERATED TALES CAME DOWN TO US AND--

LOOK OUT!

SWAP





I SAW THE MAN RESPONSIBLE, BUT HE GOT AWAY! IT WAS THAT SAIK!

POOR FELLOW! HE WILL GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO FRIGHTEN US INTO RETURNING THE TOMB!



FINALLY, AN INVITED AUDIENCE VIEWED THE FIRST PUBLIC SHOWING...



THEN, THE GUESTS ENTERED A HUGE VAULT INSIDE THE TOMB...

THIS IS A PAINTING OF CLETOMA, MEMAKATA'S QUEEN! SEATED NEXT TO HER, ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND, IS THE PHARAOH HIMSELF--IN THE FORM OF A BLACK CAT!

SHE WAS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, CLETOMA! ODDLY ENOUGH, SHE RESEMBLES ELSA!



BEWARE! YOU HAVE DARED DEFILE THE TOMB OF MY PHARAOH! HIS CURSE BE UPON YOU--AND ALL THOSE OF THIS CITY!

THE PAINTING--IT SPOKE! LET ME OUT OF HERE!

AAAGH

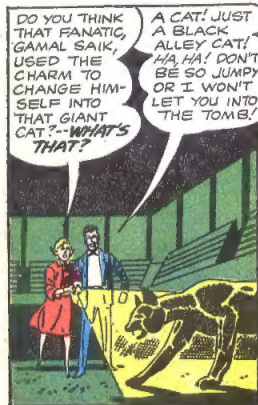
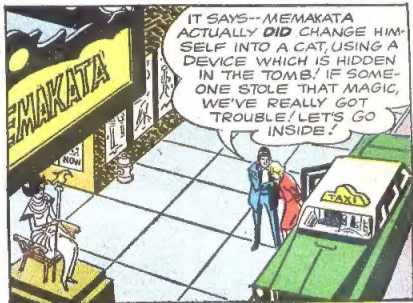
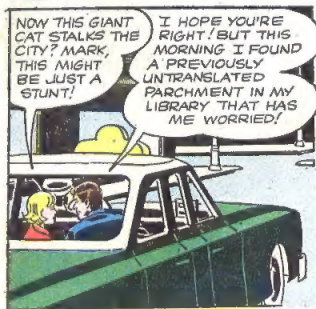
EEEAH



IN SECONDS, THE CHAMBER WAS EMPTY, EXCEPT FOR TWO OF US...

I WILL NOT LET MYSELF BELIEVE THAT THIS THING OF ANCIENT STONES AND PAINT TRULY SPOKE! IT MUST BE SOME TRICK!

QUITE LIKELY! BUT WHAT WAS THAT WARNING ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY?





HOUSE OF SECRETS

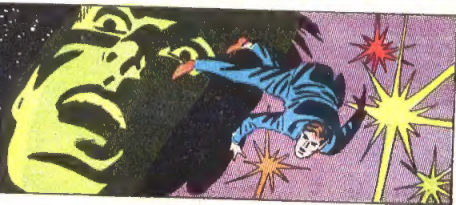


AS I FOCUSED
MY BEAM
DIRECTLY ON IT...



THAT LIGHT
REFLECTING
FROM THE
CAT'S EYES--
AGGGGGGGH!!

IT EXPLODED IN
A WEIRD, BLINDING
LIGHT! AN ARTIFICIAL
NIGHT ENVELOPED
ME AND I FELT
MYSELF TUMBLING
THROUGH SPACE...



THEN, AS MY VISION
BEGAN TO CLEAR...



WH--WHAT'S HAPPENED?
THAT BODY DOWN
THERE -- IT'S **ME!** BUT
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! HOW
CAN I BE LOOKING
DOWN ON MY
OWN BODY?

I LIFTED MY HAND-- A SICKENING
SENSATION SWEEPED THROUGH ME!

GREAT GHOSTS! IT'S CHANGED INTO
A-- **PAW!** MY BODY IS STILL
UNCHANGED! BUT MY "LIFE FORCE"
HAS ENTERED THE BODY OF THAT
CAT WE SAW! IT MUST HAVE
FOLLOWED ME IN HERE!



WHAT DOES THIS
MEAN? IS MY
HUMAN BODY--
DEAD?



ONE BOUND BROUGHT
ME ONTO THE BODY
THAT HAD BEEN MINE...



IT'S IN A STATE OF TRANCE--
THERE'S A HEART BEAT,
FAINT AND TERRIBLY SLOW--
BUT IT'S **ALIVE!** WHICH
MEANS I CAN **REVERSE**
THIS FANTASTIC EXCHANGE!



HOUSE OF SECRETS



I PICKED UP THE MAGIC CHARM WITH MY TEETH AND WHISKED TOWARD THE FLASHLIGHT...

HERE IS THE PLAN! TONIGHT, WE APPEAR BEFORE THE AUDIENCE IN THESE ANCIENT COSTUMES! WE WILL DELIVER THE FINAL WARNING THEN!

VOICES BEHIND THIS WALL! THERE'S A SECRET CHAMBER BACK THERE!

WE'LL FRIGHTEN THE FOOLS INTO RETURNING THE TOMB TO OUR COUNTRY! THIS WILL PROVE SUCH AN INSULT, OUR LEADER WILL BE DEPOSED AND I WILL BECOME PREMIER!

FAZIR! SO HE'S BEHIND THE PLOT-- NOT THAT POOR STUDENT!

BUT I WARN YOU-- MARK MERLIN SUSPECTS SOMETHING! IF WE FIND HIM SNOOPING AROUND HERE BEFORE OUR JOB IS DONE, **HE MUST DIE!**

OH-OH! I'D BETTER TRANSFER BACK INTO MY OWN BODY BEFORE THEY DISCOVER IT--AND GET RID OF IT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER!

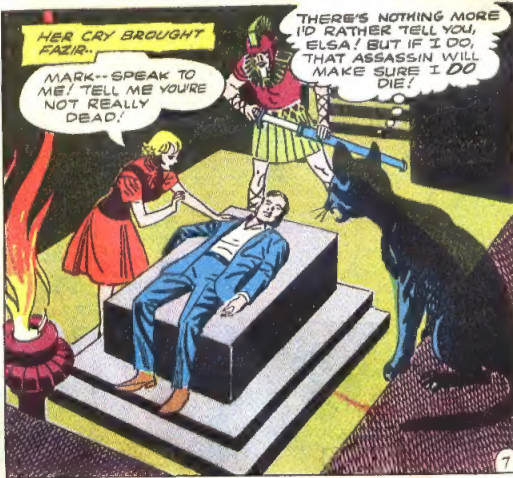
AS I SCURRIED INTO THE OTHER ROOM...

MARK! OH--NO! WHAT'S HAPPENED--?

HER CRY BROUGHT FAZIR...

MARK--SPEAK TO ME! TELL ME YOU'RE NOT REALLY DEAD!

THERE'S NOTHING MORE I'D RATHER TELL YOU, ELSA! BUT IF I DO, THAT ASSASSIN WILL MAKE SURE I DO DIE!







HOUSE OF SECRETS



SOON AFTER THE PANICKY PEOPLE STAMPEDED FROM THE ARENA...

WE'VE WON, FAZIR!
DEFINITELY! NOW WE MUST CHANGE TO OUR OWN CLOTHES! I MUST BE IN OUR EMBASSY, TO RECEIVE THE PHONE CALL DEMANDING I REMOVE THE CURSED TOMB OF MEMAKATA!



SHORTLY...

THAT FANATICAL STUDENT WAS VERY USEFUL TO US! WHILE THE POLICE ARE BUSY HUNTING FOR THAT INNOCENT FELLOW, WE--

FAZIR! TELL ME IT'S NOT TRUE!

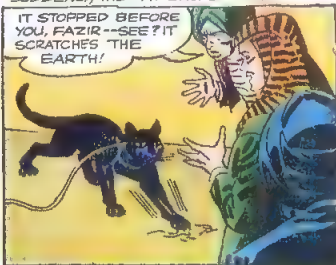


IT'S QUEEN CLEOMA--AND THE BLACK CAT--THE PHAROAH HIMSELF! THEY'VE COME TO CLAIM US FOR THE CRIMES WE COMMITTED IN THEIR RESTING PLACE!

CALM DOWN, YOU FOOL! IT'S A TRICK! IT HAS TO BE!

SUDDENLY, THE CAT BROKE AWAY..

IT STOPPED BEFORE YOU, FAZIR--SEE? IT SCRATCHES THE EARTH!



IT'S WRITING STRANGE SYMBOLS! HOW CAN A CAT DO THAT?

I WILL TELL YOU HOW FAZIR! THAT CAT IS THE TRUE SPIRIT OF MEMAKATA... AND THOSE 'STRANGE' SYMBOLS ARE THE ANCIENT LANGUAGE OF OUR PEOPLE!



IT WAS THE STUDENT, SAIK...

TRANSLATED, THIS READS,
"FAZIR IS THE CRIMINAL! HE
HAS BROUGHT SHAME
UPON ME -- MEMAKATA!"

AAAA! IT MUST
BE TRUE! NO
TRICKSTER COULD
TRAIN A CAT TO
WRITE IN A
LANGUAGE
4,000 YEARS
OLD!

TREMBLING WITH FRIGHT, FAZIR
BABBLER A FULL CONFESSION...

AND THAT GIANT,
MECHANICAL CAT
I BROUGHT TO
THIS COUNTRY
WAS HIDDEN
IN A VAN WHEN
THE POLICE
THOUGHT IT
HAD VANISHED.

WAIT A MINUTE!
SPEAKING OF
VANISHING-- THAT
CAT, AND THE
PHARAOH'S
QUEEN! THEY'RE
GONE NOW! I
STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND
THAT PART AT ALL!

AFTER I HAD REVERSED THE CHARM'S EFFECT,
AND ELSA HAD REMOVED THE COSTUME
BORROWED FROM THE EXHIBIT IN THE LOBBY.

MARK--ALIVE!
WILL YOU PLEASE
TELL ME WHAT'S
GOING ON
HERE?

YOU KNOW AS MUCH
ABOUT IT AS I DO! I
WAS UNCONSCIOUS
FOR A WHILE -- A BAD
BUMP ON THE HEAD FROM
A LOW DOORWAY IN THE
TOMB! SO I CAN'T EXPLAIN
MUCH. AND MAYBE NO ONE
EVER WILL LIEUTENANT!

LATER, IN THE PRIVACY OF MY STUDY...

THE PHARAOH'S
CAT CHARM IS
IN THAT, EH
MARK? DO YOU
SUPPOSE YOU'LL
EVER USE IT
AGAIN?

IT'S A GREAT TEMPTA-
TION, ELSA! WITH MAGIC
LIKE THIS, I COULD
FIGHT THE FORCES OF
EVIL BETTER THAN
EVER! BUT DOES ANY
MAN HAVE THE RIGHT
TO USE SUCH GREAT
POWER?

I'M STILL PONDERING THAT QUESTION! MAYBE
YOU CAN HELP ME TO DECIDE!

THE END

ADVERTISEMENT

Tootsie Roll makes HISTORY!

History says, Ponce de Leon from Spain
For the Fountain of Youth searched in vain
But really his goal
Was the great **Tootsie Roll**
Which brought pleasure again and again.

AMERICA'S FAVORITE CANDY!

Tootsie Roll





STRANGE SPORTS Stories

IS THE

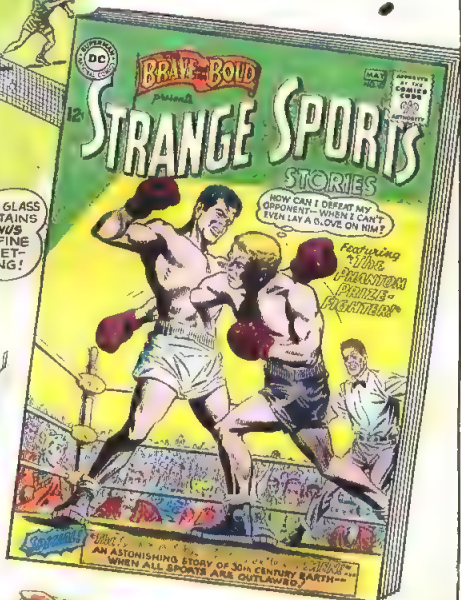
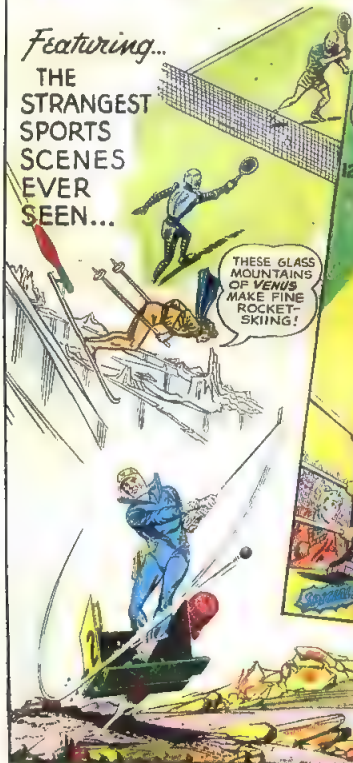
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SPECTACULAR
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**MAGAZINE EVER
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Featuring...

**THE
STRANGEST
SPORTS
SCENES
EVER
SEEN...**




**ON SALE
EVERYWHERE!**




THE ANCIENT "PANDORA'S BOX" WAS OMINOUS--SINISTER...AND PRESUMED TO HOLD A CURSE FOR THOSE WHO OPENED IT! IT HELD SOMETHING ELSE, TOO -- A STAGGERING SURPRISE FOR THE FOUR PERSONS WHO DARED PRY INTO THE SECRET OF.

THE BOX OF FOUR FEARS



WHAT IS THIS THING--
A CURSE FROM THE
BOX? HELP--HELP!



DEEP IN MEXICO, HILLS AS OLD AS TIME ARE
RIPPED BY POWERFUL BLASTS TO MAKE WAY
FOR A NEW HIGHWAY.



LATER, PLAYING YOUNGSTERS FIND AN
ANCIENT, ORNATE CHEST THAT WAS
UNEARTHED...

WHAT IS
IN IT, RAMON?

I DON'T KNOW--I CAN'T
GET IT OPEN! BUT IT IS
VERY LIGHT! LET'S TAKE
IT TO THE HOTEL--TO
SEÑOR DIAZ! HE
KNOWS EVERYTHING!





HOUSE OF SECRETS



WHATEVER ELSE SEÑOR DIAZ KNOWS, HE IS FULLY AWARE OF THE TOURISTS' PENDANT FOR SOUVENIRS AND CURIOS -- SO HE SUMMONS THE HOTEL'S FIVE GUESTS...

I WANT TO GIVE **ALL** OF YOU A CHANCE TO BUY THIS STRANGE, SEALED BOX, FOUND IN THE HILLS BY TWO OF MY LITTLE FRIENDS!



THESE FIVE, WHOSE LIVES HAVE COME TOGETHER IN THIS TINY HOTEL-CROSSROADS, STARE CURIOUSLY AT THE BOX...

WHY SHOULD WE BID AGAINST ONE ANOTHER? SUPPOSE WE ALL CHIP IN AND BUY IT--AND SHARE IT? YOU'RE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST, SELKIRK! WHAT'LL WE OFFER?

OFF-HAND, PETERSON, I CAN'T SAY! LET'S OFFER A HUNDRED DOLLARS!



NOT ONE TO HAGGLE, SEÑOR DIAZ JUMPS AT THE SUM, AND THE EXCITED GROUP PROCEEDS TO SELKIRK'S ROOM...

NOTHING IN IT BUT **FOUR** SCROLLS--WITH AZTEC WRITING ON THEM! WHAT'S IT SAY, SELKIRK?



SELKIRK LOOKS UNEASILY AT THE OTHERS--VARNAY, THE WRITER; PETERSON, WEALTHY PLAYBOY; MILLER, EX-PRIZE FIGHTER, AND HIS APPREHENSIVE WIFE...

FIRST, WE'LL SHARE OUR TREASURE--A SCROLL FOR EACH OF YOU--AND ONE FOR MR. AND MRS. MILLER!



THIS WILL SHOCK YOU--BUT IT APPEARS WE'VE OPENED A BOX OF **DOOM!** LIKE PANDORA'S BOX, IT WILL OFFER NOTHING BUT TROUBLE--SO SAY THESE CRYPTIC MESSAGES!



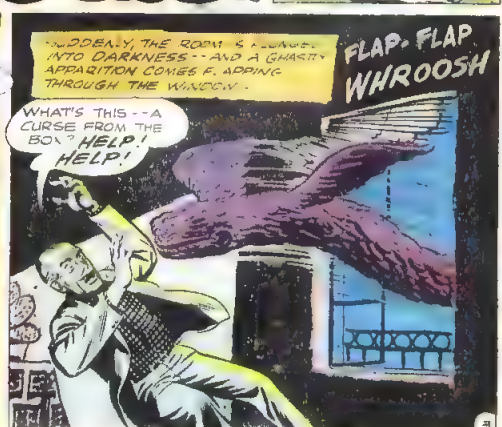
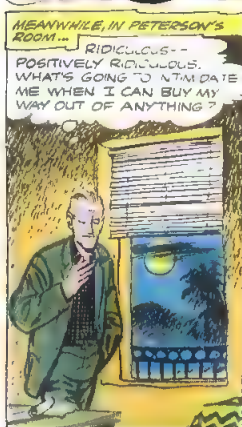
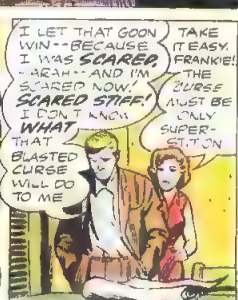
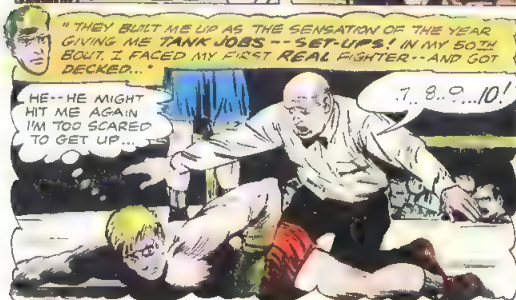
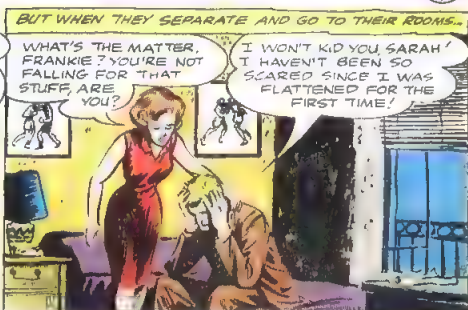
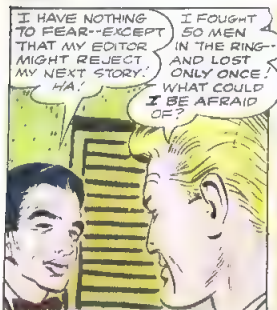
EACH OF US WILL BE FACED BY THE THING WE **FEAR** MOST--AND WILL BE DESTROYED BY IT! IN SHORT, THE BOX CARRIES A **CURSE!**



HMPH! WHAT CAN A MAN WHO HAS THREE MILLION DOLLARS BE AFRAID OF? I CAN BUY MY WAY OUT OF **ANY** SPOT!



HOUSE OF SECRETS





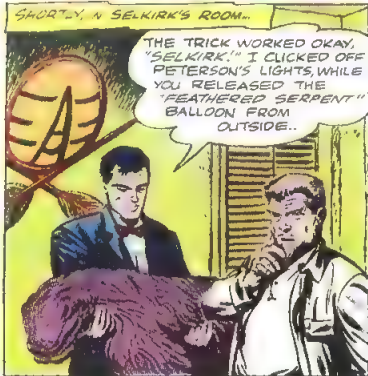
GET IT AWAY FROM ME-- PLEASE!
I'LL PAY YOU ANYTHING YOU WISH--
BUT **GET IT AWAY--!**

WHAT'RE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?
I DON'T SEE
ANYTHING!

CLICK!

YOU SAY, IT WAS AN
ANCIENT **FEATHERED
SERPENT**-- A BEAST
SUPPOSEDLY EXISTING
IN AZTEC TIMES?
BUT THAT WAS
MYTHOLOGICAL!

NO--I
SAW IT!
BUT IF
MY MONEY
CAN'T
HELP ME,
I'M
CLEARING
OUT OF
HERE!



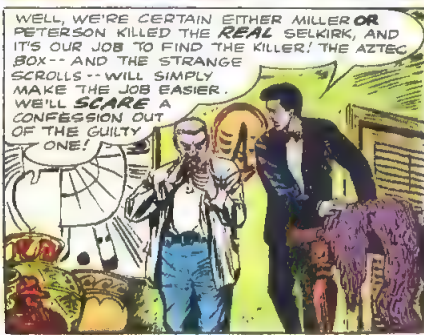
SHORTLY, IN SELKIRK'S ROOM...

THE TRICK WORKED OKAY,
"SELKIRK!" I CLICKED OFF
PETERSON'S LIGHTS, WHILE
YOU RELEASED THE
"FEATHERED SERPENT"
BALLOON FROM
OUTSIDE...



... THE ESCAPING AIR
SHOT THE BALLOON
AT HIM LIKE A JET!
**WOW! WAS HE
SCARED!**

BUT WE DIDN'T
LEARN A **THING!**
WE THOUGHT WE'D
RUSH IN AND FIND
HIM BABBLING A
CONFESSION OF
MURDER-- BUT WE
WERE WRONG!



WELL, WE'RE CERTAIN EITHER MILLER OR
PETERSON KILLED THE **REAL** SELKIRK, AND
IT'S OUR JOB TO FIND THE KILLER! THE AZTEC
BOX-- AND THE STRANGE
SCROLLS-- WILL SIMPLY
MAKE THE JOB EASIER.
WE'LL **SCARE** A
CONFESSION OUT
OF THE GUILTY
ONE!



YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE
WASHED UP AS AN
ACTOR! BUT YOU
NEVER PLAYED A
MORE CONVINCING
ROLE! WITH THAT
CREW-CUT AND FALSE
GOATEE,
YOU **ARE**
SELKIRK!

AND I
WONDER
WHAT THE
MURDERER
IS THINKING
NOW! **HA--**
LET'S
RECONSTRUCT
THE CASE...



HOUSE OF SECRETS



"THE REAL SELKIRK, WE THINK, DISCOVERED SOME SORT OF AZTEC TREASURE AT THE PYRAMID-- BUT THE KILLER TRAILED HIM THREE NIGHTS AGO, AND SHOT HIM..."



NOW THAT I'VE APPEARED, THE MURDERER UNQUESTIONABLY THINKS HIS SHOT MISSED...

AND ALSO MIGHT THINK THAT YOU SAW HIM! IN THAT CASE HE MIGHT TRY AGAIN--UNLESS WE CAN TRICK HIM INTO A CONFESSION...

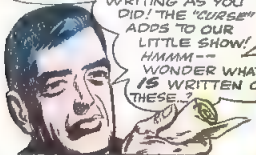


BY THE WAY, IT WAS QUICK - THINKING ON YOUR PART TO "TRANSLATE" THE AZTEC WRITING AS YOU DID! THE "CURSE" ADDS TO OUR LITTLE SHOW!

HMM-- WUNDER WHAT IS WRITTEN ON THESE...

I HAVEN'T THE VAGUEST IDEA! LET'S RETURN TO THE MURDERER... AFTER HE SHOT SELKIRK, WHAT DID HE DO NEXT?

PROBABLY CAME BACK HERE TO MINGLE WITH THE OTHER GUESTS... AFTER HE TOOK THE AZTEC GOLD AND RE-BURIED IT!

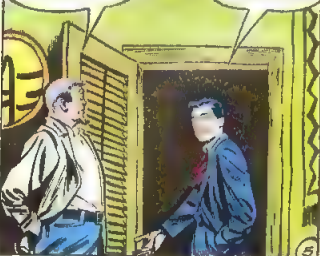


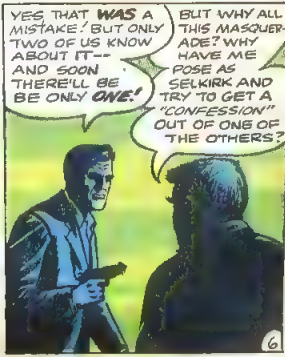
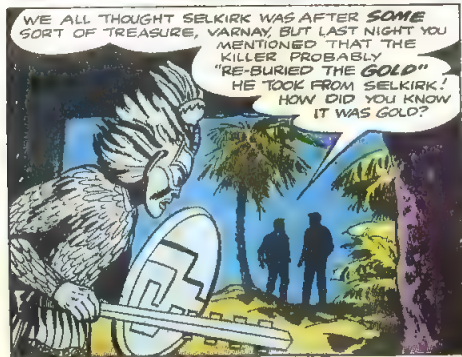
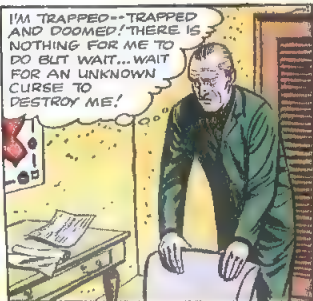
AH, YES, THE GOLD... WELL, YOU'D BETTER NOT LINGER HERE ANY LONGER, VARNAY! LET'S MEET AGAIN TOMORROW NIGHT... AT THE PYRAMIDS! MAYBE WE CAN FIND A CLUE THERE!



BY THE WAY--PETERSON FEARS ANY SITUATION HE CAN'T BUY HIS WAY OUT OF... MILLER SEEMS FRIGHTENED OF EVEN A SHADOW... I FEAR FACING AN AUDIENCE AGAIN! WHAT DO YOU FEAR, VARNAY?

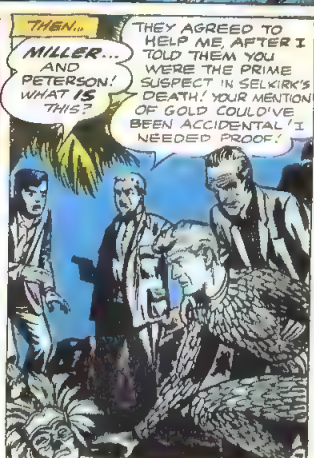
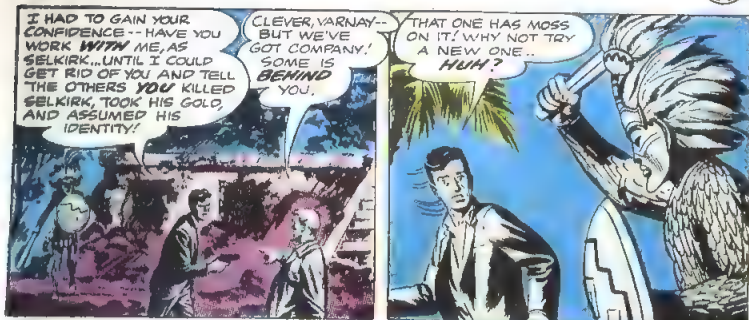
I'M AFRAID OF NOT GETTING A STORY ON A KILLER! GOOD NIGHT, "SELKIRK!"







HOUSE OF SECRETS



LATER, AT THE HOTEL...

NOW THAT VARNAY IS IN THE LOCAL JAIL, SEÑOR DIAZ, TELL THE OTHERS WHAT YOU TOLD ME EARLIER TODAY!

AH, YES--ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS SCROLLS! AN OLD MAN IN THE VILLAGE WAS ABLE TO TRANSLATE THE WRITING.

THE SCROLLS WERE CARRIED BY AZTEC WARRIORS INTO BATTLE! THE INSCRIPTION SAYS "FEAR IS AN ENEMY THAT TAKES REFUGE IN THE MIND! COURAGE IS A FRIEND THAT DRIVES FEAR OUT!" THAT IS ALL IT SAYS!

BY A QUIRK OF FATE, THE SCROLLS WORKED FOR US, INSTEAD OF AGAINST US. I'M A CHANGED MAN! FROM NOW ON, I CAN TAKE ON ANYBODY!

THIS TELEGRAM SAID MY INVESTMENTS WERE WIPED OUT! I HAD TO BE FLAT BROKE TO REALIZE I COULD DO SOMETHING MYSELF--AND BE A BETTER MAN FOR IT!

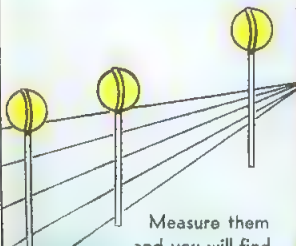
WELL, SINCE I COULD CONVINCE YOU PEOPLE I WAS SELKIRK, I'M SURE I CAN CONVINCE AUDIENCES I CAN STILL ACT. I'M GOING BACK!

AND IN THAT SMALL VILLAGE, A HANDFUL OF FRIGHTENED PEOPLE FOUND COURAGE--AND A KILLER! WAS THE BOX TRULY RESPONSIBLE?

THE END

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Mark Merlin's Mailbox

Dear Mark: Speaking of superstitions, which you always are, is it true that coins once were placed under the masts of ships under construction as good luck charms?

Ronald Hoyt, Houston, Texas
Yes, and they still are, although how and when it began is unknown. Many American naval vessels today observe the custom. Among the more notable is the U.S.S. New Orleans, which, while being built, had 28 pennies, two dimes and three nickels placed under her mainmast, and 10 pennies, heads up, put under her foremast.

SNIPPINGS FROM MAILBAG MISSIVES:
Writes Steven Goering of Moundridge, Kansas: "Not only were all the stories in the February issue excellent, but the art was outstanding. As for the Letters Page, I especially enjoyed the feature because it offered fan letters and question-and-answers." . . . "I've never written a fan letter before," pens Bob McCall of Newport, Oregon, "but I just had to write and tell you what I think of your magazine. In a word, Wahoo!"

Many more pats on the back from Melvin Purdue of Westport, Indiana; Thomas Brady, New York City; and David Lawrence, Fairfield, Alabama, who included a dramatic account of the discovery of the S.S. *Oorang Medan*, which was found drifting by rescuers with all hands aboard, dead. . . . From Dan Williams of Cleveland; Lucille Berman, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Peter Keiler, Concord, N. H.; Henry Westerfield, Hollywood, Fla.; Walter Polk, Scranton, Pa.; and Fern Bieber, who wrote from East Sandwich, Mass., to say that "I had lost track of you and your stories until I saw your HOUSE OF SECRETS No. 58. I thought it was great, I didn't know about Mark's origin and was delighted to see it." . . . We regret that a last-minute change made it necessary to defer "The Terrible Prophecies of the Tattooed Man" from the last issue to this one, but we're sure you enjoyed its replacement, "The Keeper of the Killer Clocks." . . . You may be interested in learning that there IS a Mark Merlin, and we've written him, requesting permission to publish his remarkable letter! Watch the next issue!

Dear Mark: Among the most superstitious people are musical folk who had various ways of assuring themselves good luck. For instance, Toscanini always carried a gold piece in his pants pocket; Lily Pons snipped off a piece of the stage curtain;

Lucy Monroe calls three friends immediately after a phone call turns out to be a wrong number; Howard Barlow always wears a blue shirt when he conducts; the late Ezio Pinza always carried a little doll given to him at his operatic debut in Italy; Salvatore Baccaloni pockets a good-luck piece forged by steelworkers in Milan; Rise Stevens considers it bad luck if makeup powder spatters her dressing room mirror.

Tilly Lohman, San Gabriel, Calif.

Dear Mark: Talk about planes and ships that disappear from the face of the earth. I bet you never heard about a railroad car that vanished while it was hooked up in the middle of a long freight train! Back in 1900 when the train began its 25-mile non-stop haul, there were 38 cars. When it finally pulled into the depot, the refrigeration car that was riding in the middle was gone! Startled police and railway detectives started an investigation, which ended a month later when a farmer discovered the missing car in his field. What had happened? Police had only to visit the site of the mishap to deduce that while rounding a sharp curve, the car had become uncoupled at both ends and had fallen off the rails. Then both sections of the train had closed up and coupled themselves to each other. Neat, eh?

Jim Bryson, Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mark: My father tells me that while he served with our Occupation forces in Germany, he visited a museum in Berlin which displayed the "Ring of Death," reputed to have been worn by Hitler. Can you give me any information about it?

B.T.B., Waco, Texas

It was customary for the Iffland ring to be worn by the greatest German actor, who, in turn, awarded it to the actor he considered to be the most promising. Before the late Albert Basserman came to this country, where he played in many Hollywood movies, he presented it four times, but on each occasion, the recipient soon died. Unaware of the ring's jinx, Hitler accepted it from an unknown donor. Hitler's body never was recovered after the war, but the ring was found not far from his headquarters, and eventually was put on display in the museum.

Address all letters to MARK MERLIN, HOUSE OF SECRETS, National Periodical Publications, 575 Lexington Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

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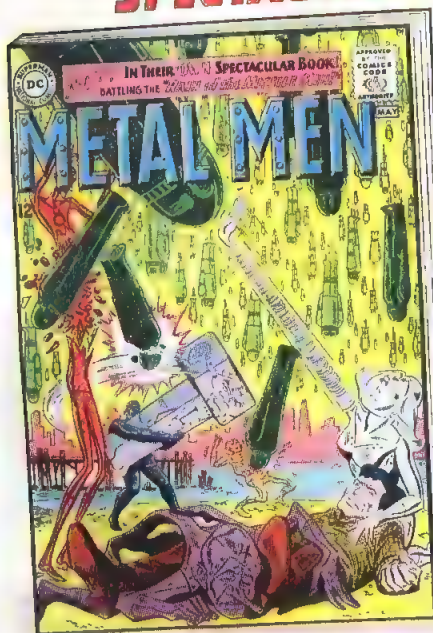
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DR. WILL MAGNUS
Is Inventor (©)
OF THE METAL
MEN.

AND DON'T FORGET ME--**TINA!**



PLATINUM

...AND DON'T YOU FORGET TO BUY YOUR COPY TODAY--IT MAY BE A "COLLECTOR'S ITEM" ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

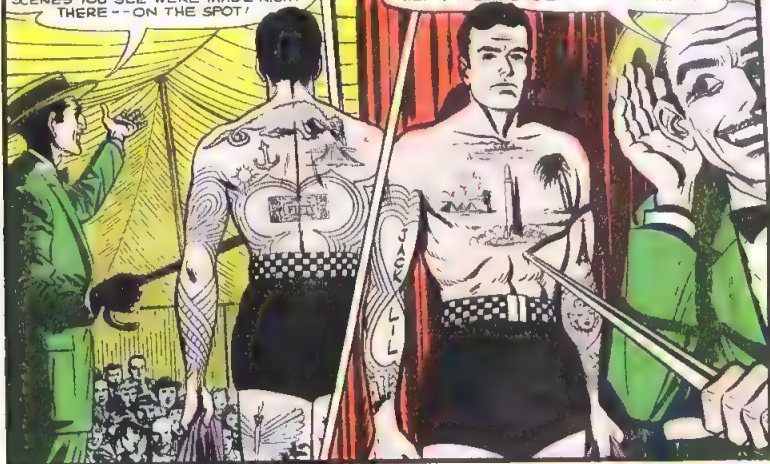


NOW SEE HERKO, THE TATTOOED MAN--THE WALKING TRAVELOGUE! HE'S ILLUSTRATED FROM HEAD TO TOE WITH VIVID SCENES FROM AROUND THE WORLD! BUT BE **CAREFUL**--ONE OF THE PICTURES MIGHT **CHANGE**, CATCHING YOU UNAWARES IN...

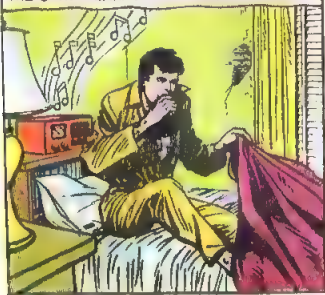
The TERRIBLE PROPHECIES of the TATTOOED MAN

HERKO HAS TRAVELED THROUGH MANY LANDS, LADIES AN' GENTLEMEN! THE SCENES YOU SEE WERE MADE RIGHT THERE--ON THE SPOT!

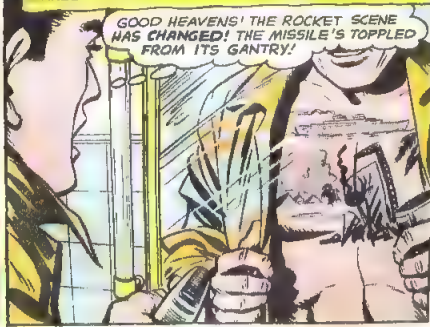
A GREAT OCEAN LINER SAILS THE ATLANTIC-- A MIGHTY ROCKET BLASTS OFF--YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR THE THUNDER OF THE LAUNCH.



JACK TRAVIS, BILLED AS HERKO--THE TATTOOED MAN--RISES EARLY THIS DAY AT THE BOARDING HOUSE WHERE HE AND THE OTHER CARNY FOLK ARE STAYING.



AS HE PREPARES TO SHAVE, THE TATTOOED MAN STARES INCREDULOUSLY AT HIS REFLECTION...



GOOD HEAVENS! THE ROCKET SCENE HAS CHANGED! THE MISSILE'S TOPPLED FROM ITS GANTRY!



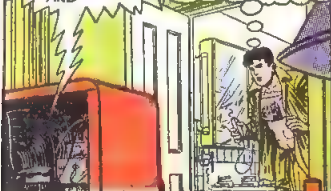
HOUSE OF SECRETS



BUT EVEN MORE STUNNING IS A RADIO NEWS BULLETIN...

AMERICA'S LATEST ATTEMPT TO FIRE A ROCKET INTO SPACE FAILED WHEN IT CRASHED, AND --

THIS IS CRAZY! THE ROCKET TATTOOED ON MY CHEST COLLAPSES-- SO DOES A REAL ONE AT CANAVERAL!



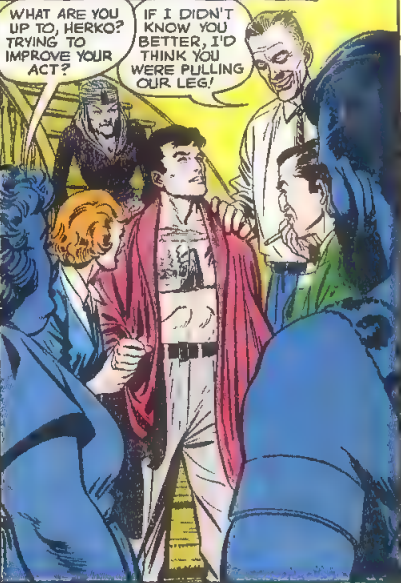
WHAT KIND OF WEIRD THINGS ARE GOING ON? I'VE GOT TO TALK TO SOMEONE-- LIL, HARRY--!



DOWNSTAIRS, THE OTHERS GROUP AROUND HIM, GAPING AT THE PHENOMENAL CHANGE...

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, HERKO? TRYING TO IMPROVE YOUR ACT?

IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU BETTER, I'D THINK YOU WERE PULLING OUR LEG!



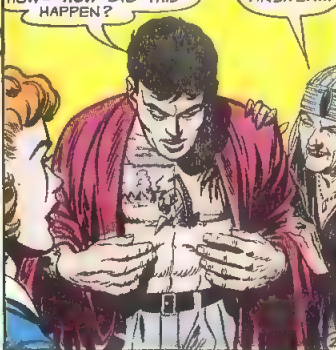
PLEASE--YOU MUST BELIEVE ME! I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS! IF I WANTED TO PULL SUCH A TRICK, I'D CERTAINLY TELL YOU AND HARRY!

I KNOW, DARLING... AND YET...



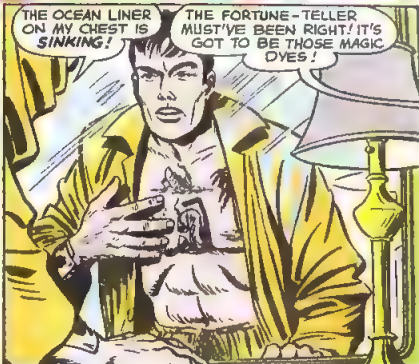
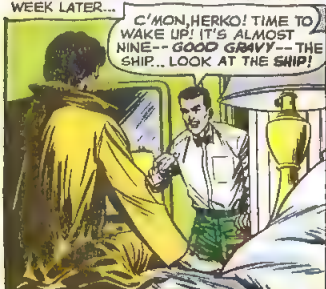
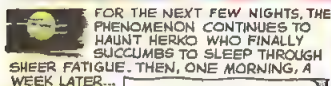
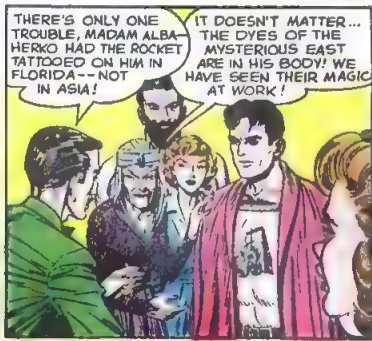
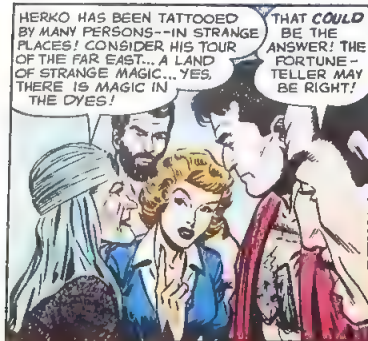
TATTOOS CAN'T CHANGE OVERNIGHT... BUT HOW, HOW--HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

MAYBE I HAVE THE ANSWER...





HOUSE OF SECRETS



AS THEY RUSH DOWNSTAIRS TO TELL LIL, THEY OVERHEAR A TV NEWSCAST...

THE S.S. NAVAJO, PLUSH LINER, STRUCK AN ICEBERG EARLY THIS MORNING AND SANK...



YOUR TATTOOS ARE BECOMING PROPHECIES--*TERRIBLE* PROPHECIES!

IF MY TATTOOS ARE CHANGING INTO DISASTERS, WHAT ABOUT LIL? I WON'T LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO HER!





HOUSE OF SECRETS



DRESSING QUICKLY, THE PANICKY PERFORMER RACES TO THE MIDWAY



"NEEDLES"--YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME! I WANT LIL'S PICTURE REMOVED FROM MY ARM! HURRY--BEFORE SOMETHING HAPPENS TO HER!

I'M WORRIED TOO, DARLING! AS OWNER OF THE CARNIVAL, I'M CLOSING YOUR ACT TILL WE SOLVE THIS MYSTERY! MAYBE YOU SHOULD EVEN GO AWAY FOR AWHILE!

NO! WE WERE SEPARATED ONCE-- BUT NEVER AGAIN! I'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS! THE CHANGES OCCUR ONLY AT NIGHT--AND IF THE TATTOOS CHANGE AGAIN, I'LL SIT UP THROUGH THE NIGHT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS!



LATER... I'M SORRY! I TRIED, BUT I CAN'T REMOVE THAT COLORING! THAT'S ONE OF THE TATTOOS YOU HAD PUT ON IN THE FAR EAST--AND THE DYES ARE STRANGE TO ME!

I SEE... I SEE...



I WAS EXPECTING YOU AT THE TENT, HERKO, AND GOT WORRIED WHEN YOU DIDN'T SHOW UP!

WORRIED? I'M THE ONE WHO'S WORRIED!



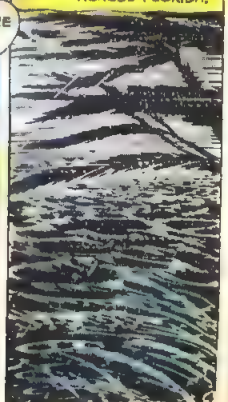
FOR THREE NIGHTS, NOTHING HAPPENS WHILE HERKO CATNAPS IN APPREHENSION AND FEAR. THEN ON THE FOURTH DAY, HE RUSHES TO THE MIDWAY...

IT HAPPENED AGAIN DURING THE NIGHT! THE QUIET TROPICAL SCENE IS NOW-- A HURRICANE!

I'M BETTING A HURRICANE WILL BLOW UP SOMEWHERE BECAUSE OF THIS!



AND NOOED, A REPORT THAT AFTERNOON "HURRICANE HANNAH RAGES ACROSS FLORIDA!"





HOUSE OF SECRETS



WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I'VE GOT TO STAY AWAKE ALL NIGHT IF I'M TO SOLVE THIS FANTASTIC RIDDLE!



BUT, NOT LONG AFTER, AS HE PREPARES FOR THE SHOW...

I'M GLAD TODAY'S PAYDAY! I'M GOING TO AN EXPERT IN NEW YORK AND HAVE ALL MY TATTOOS REMOVED! I'LL END THESE PROPHECIES OF DOOM, EVEN IF IT MEANS THE FINISH OF MY CAREER!



HERKO-- SOMETHING **DID** CHANGE! THE \$50 BILL IS BEING CLUTCHED BY A **HAND**!

BUT WHERE.. AND WHEN WILL IT OCCUR?



WAIT A MINUTE-- I THINK I'VE GOT IT..

ALL NIGHT LONG, HE MAINTAINS HIS TENSE VIGIL, WAITING... WATCHING... THEN, AT DAWN ...

EVERY-THING OKAY?

RIGHT, HARRY-- **NOTHING** CHANGED! WHATEVER IT WAS THAT PREVIOUSLY CHANGED THE TATTOOS DIDN'T WORK WHEN I STAYED AWAKE! BUT HOW LONG CAN I KEEP THAT UP?



OH, NO! I THOUGHT IT WAS OVER!... LISTEN, IF A HAND IS CLUTCHING THE BILL-- IT SUGGESTS A **ROBBERY**!



TODAY'S PAYDAY, LIL!... **OUR** PAYDAY! COULD THIS MEAN THE CARNIVAL'S RECEIPTS ARE IN DANGER?

I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT! I'D BETTER CHECK RIGHT AWAY!

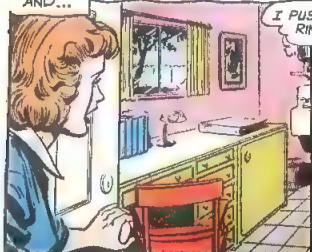




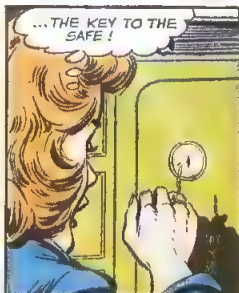
HOUSE OF SECRETS



RACING TO THE TRUCK THAT SERVES AS HER OFFICE, LIL ENTERS, AND...



I PUSH A BUTTON ON MY RING--AND OUT COMES...



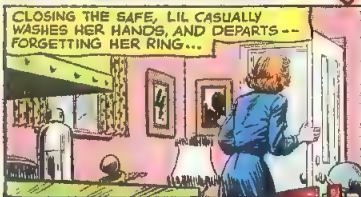
...THE KEY TO THE SAFE!



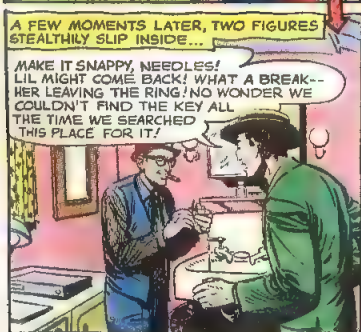
THE MONEY'S INTACT--
THANK GOODNESS!

BUT AS
NEEDLES
QUICKLY
INSERTS
THE ODD
KEY...

YOUR PLAN WORKED, DIDN'T
IT, HARRY... **ALMOST!**

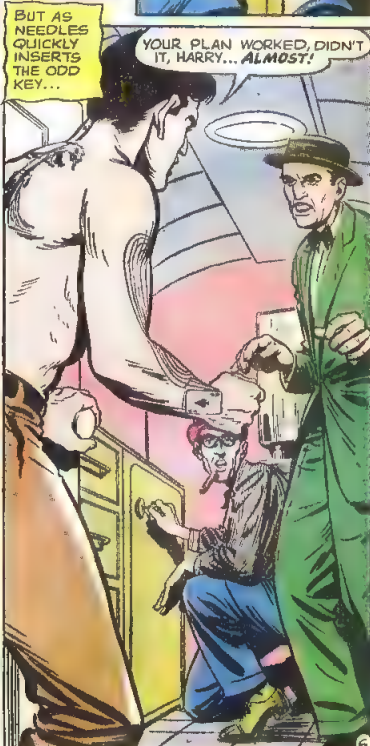


CLOSING THE SAFE, LIL CASUALLY
WASHES HER HANDS, AND DEPARTS--
FORGETTING HER RING...



A FEW MOMENTS LATER, TWO FIGURES
STEALTHILY SLIP INSIDE...

MAKE IT SNAPPY, NEEDLES!
LIL MIGHT COME BACK! WHAT A BREAK--
HER LEAVING THE RING! NO WONDER WE
COULDN'T FIND THE KEY ALL
THE TIME WE SEARCHED
THIS PLACE FOR IT!





YOU KNEW... ALL ALONG! BUT HOW?

NEEDLES GAVE YOUR SCHEME AWAY... WHEN HE TOLD ME HE COULDN'T REMOVE LIL'S PORTRAIT FROM MY ARM BECAUSE IT WAS MADE WITH MYSTERIOUS DYES OF THE FAR EAST!



NEEDLES KNEW I HAD THE PORTRAIT PUT ON IN THE FAR EAST--BUT HE *DIDN'T* KNOW THAT WHEN LIL AND I BROKE UP LATER--*I HAD THE PORTRAIT REMOVED!* WHEN WE WERE ENGAGED AGAIN, I HAD IT REPLACED... IN BOSTON! THERE WERE **NO** MYSTERIOUS FOREIGN INKS!



"NEEDLES' LYING MADE ME SUSPICIOUS! I WAS ON GUARD AGAINST EVERYTHING, INCLUDING FOOD AND WATER! THAT NIGHT, AS I FEIGNED SLEEP..."

THE SEDATIVE YOU PUT IN HIS COFFEE AT DINNER DID THE JOB. NOW, I CAN COVER THE **ORIGINAL** TATTOO WITH A SKIN-COLORED DYE...



...THEN, "PRINT" A HURRICANE SCENE IN INDELIBLE INK OVER THE BLANK AREA! IT'LL WEAR OFF EVENTUALLY, BUT BY THEN WE'LL BE LONG GONE!



FIGURING I'D STAY AWAKE THE NEXT NIGHT, YOU ALSO CHANGED THE \$50-BILL TATTOO ON MY BACK! MY CLOAK HID IT FROM VIEW UNTIL HARRY NOTED THE CHANGE!



YOU USED TO WAIT FOR MIDNIGHT NEWS BULLETINS-- THE TOPPLED ROCKET... THE SUNKEN LINER... THE HURRICANE-- THEN YOU CHANGED THE TATTOOS TO COINCIDE WITH THE DISASTERS! ALL THIS WAS A CUNNING BUILD-UP TO DISCOVER WHERE LIL KEPT THE KEY TO HER SAFE!

THE SCHEME WAS TIMED SO THAT THE \$50 BILL WOULD BE "CHANGED" ON **PAYDAY!** THEN LIL WOULD RUSH TO HER SAFE AND REVEAL THE KEY'S HIDING PLACE WHILE YOU TWO WATCHED! SHE REMOVED THE RING AT MY SUGGESTION, SO YOU'D SEE IT AND MAKE YOUR PLAY!



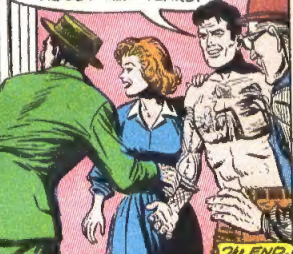
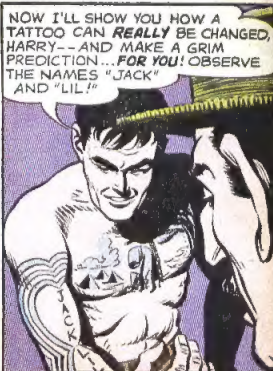
SEE...BY COVERING THE LAST TWO LETTERS OF "JACK" AND THE FIRST LETTER OF "LIL," I SPELL OUT JAIL!

NOT FOR ME! I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE--WITH THE MONEY!

BUT...

DON'T TRY IT, MISTER! YOU'RE COVERED! WE'VE BEEN OUTSIDE ALL THE TIME--WAITING...

WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE A TATTOO OF THIS SCENE, HARRY--AND IT WON'T CHANGE, I PROMISE YOU, FOR ABOUT TEN YEARS!

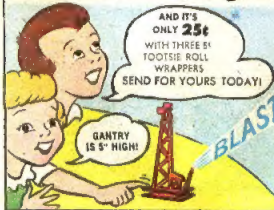


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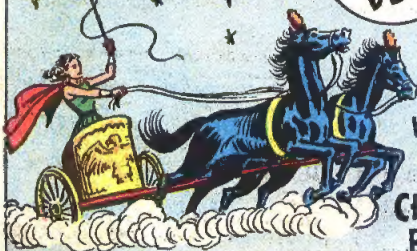
The ORIGINAL
HUGO ZACCHINI
CANNON ACT

NATAL
The Almost Human Gorilla

Paul Kelly's Wild Animals


21
 PERFORMING ELEPHANTS
The FLYING ZACCHINIS

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